

Pray Like Jabez

Ever heard of Jabez? Until recently, I would have told you I hadn't either. Jabez is only one of hundreds of names recorded in a genealogy hidden away in 1 Chronicles, one of the least-read books of the Bible. Except he must have been a little special, for, unlike most of the other hundreds, we're given a tantalizing little biography about him:

Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested. (1 Chronicles 4:9-10, NKJV)

His life apparently didn't start well, being saddled with a name that literally means "pain." But after crying out to God, who heard and answered, Jabez finished very well, distinguished for all eternity as "more honorable" in God's sight. The means of that transformation? It's his deceptively simple prayer. Read it again. Jabez asks for God's blessing, for a larger sphere of influence, for God's hand to be with him, and to be kept from evil. It doesn't sound so extraordinary, does it? Maybe even selfish? After all, he seems to be thinking only of himself, right? Wrong. How do we know? For one thing, because God found Jabez "honorable" and granted his request.

Simply put, God favors those who ask. He holds back nothing from those who want and earnestly long for what He wants. To say that you want to be "more honorable" in God's eyes is not arrogance or self-centeredness. "More honorable" describes what God thinks; it's not credit we take for ourselves. You would be giving in to a carnal impulse if you were trying to outdo someone else, but you are living in the Spirit when you strive to receive God's highest reward. "I press toward the goal for the prize," Paul wrote in his last epistle (Philippians 3:14)...

I have no space here to do Jabez and his prayer justice, so I would highly encourage you to read a little book – a *New York Times* #1 Bestseller – by Bruce Wilkinson (from which the above quote is taken) called *The Prayer of Jabez* to discover its powerful secrets. The prayer has been life-altering for thousands, as it can be for you. My point today is summed up in Wilkinson's line: "God favors those who ask. He holds back nothing from those who want and earnestly long for what He wants." So pray like Jabez.

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